

When the memory of the men who died  
Both North and South is one.

This regiment will still shine forth  
In annals of the free:  
The Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth  
Who fought for Liberty.

Abe Lincoln had refused to act,

Moreover, Stanton too.  
The one to recognize the fact  
Was the Governor John Andrew.

He fought to do what saved the war:  
Bring Blacks into the fray.  
For up 'til then there'd been a bar  
By both the Blue and Grey.

When Lincoln signed the document  
Which brought Emancipation,  
The administration did relent,  
Accompanying authorization.

From the Commonwealth the call rang out:  
"Come Colored Men to Arms."

Amid the ridicule and doubt  
They answered war's alarm.

They came from city and the farm;  
Left sweethearts, wives and mothers  
To wear that Union uniform,  
And free their shackled brothers.

From every state they filled the roll,  
From Maryland to Maine.

The Gov'nor more than reached his goal,  
The mandate now was plain:

To show that these Black fighting men  
Were equal to the task:

To never have to prove again;  
To never have to ask.

They served for less than equal pay,  
Accepting none, 'til righted.

Enlisted, they remained to stay,  
Their honor yet unblighted.

Eli George Biddle, Edward Hines  
And Sergeant William Carney:  
The knowledge of whom redefines  
The Northern Grand Old Army.

Andrew had turned to Robert Shaw  
To lead this regiment.

For in this bold Brahmin he saw  
The strength of firm commitment.

The men trained with exactitude,  
To Milit'ry precision.

With courage, strength and fortitude  
They faced their disposition.

Fort Wagner in South Caroline  
Would prove their maiden test,  
To see if courage would align  
By bringing forth the best

From Blacks who fought to free the slave,  
For Justice and the Right—  
These soldiers who when called on gave  
New meaning to the Fight.

With neither map nor smooth terrain  
They charged the mouth of Hell.  
Into the with'ring blast they came  
Ignoring shot and shell.

Young Colonel Shaw, while rallying forth  
With sword clutched in his hand.  
Exhorted, "Onward Fifty Fourth"  
His ultimate command.

He died upon the parapet.  
He fell amidst his men.

All buried in a common pit,  
Returned to earth as kin.

The standard bearer breathed his last;  
The flag was going down.  
Thrice wounded Carney grabbed it fast:  
"It never hit the ground."

This soldier from New Bedford soil,  
Who hailed from Company "C"  
Half-dead amid the bloody toil,  
Dismissed his own safety.

The men fought valiantly that day,  
Though victory was denied.  
Amid the wreaths and laurels lay  
A source of new found pride.

For courage, neither black nor white;

Resides within us all,  
When we surrender to our plight  
And answer duty's call.

When the drumbeat and the fife subside  
And the celebration's done,  
And the memory of the men who died  
Both North and South is one.

This regiment will still shine forth  
In annals of the free:  
The Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth.  
They died for Liberty.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM: AMERICANS SKEPTICAL ABOUT PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS

**HON. RICHARD E. NEAL**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, during the past year the President has engaged Americans in a dialogue about the reform of Social Security. This dialog is a precursor to the President and Congress addressing Social Security reform next year.

Last week, President Clinton participated in dialog in Albuquerque, NM, and he outlined five fundamental principles with are essential to Social Security reform. These principles are: universality and fairness, provide a benefit people can count on, continue to protect the disabled and low-income beneficiaries, fiscally disciplined approach, and strengthen and protect the guarantee.

Social Security was created as part of the New Deal and it benefits 44 million elderly and disabled Americans. The system needs to be reformed, but there should not be a shift away from its fundamental principles. Without making changes, the system will be insolvent by 2032.

Many of us in Congress differ on how to fix Social Security. Even a commission assigned with the task of reforming Social Security could not reach a unanimous consensus and instead, reported out three very different solutions. The concept of allowing individuals to place a portion of their payroll tax in a private account has been suggested and serious deliberation needs to occur to understand the consequences such a change would have on the guarantee of the benefit provided by the system.

On July 25, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare released a study which was conducted by Peter Hart Research Associates which surveyed a sample of 1,094 adults and 326 of these individuals were aged 18–34. The survey focused on Social Security and proposals to reform the system which included private accounts. The crux of the survey was Generation Xer's want the Social Security system fixed but oppose tax increases, benefit cuts, and a higher retirement age.

Generation Xer's share the same sentiment as their parents and grandparents in agreeing that "Congress should fix Social Security by strengthening its financial condition, so that future retirees will be guaranteed a reasonable level of benefits." Many believe that younger Americans would like Social Security privatized and invested in individual accounts. This study showed that most Americans including younger Americans want the system fixed and do not think privatization is the answer.

Of all the adults surveyed, 73 percent believe the Social Security system can work for young people when they retire if Congress will strengthen the system's finance and 69 percent of the adults surveyed that were between 18 and 34 years old agree. The survey inquired about private accounts and only 39 percent of those surveyed between 18 and 34 years of age supported allowing individuals to invest their Social Security contributions in the stock market, so that people can manage their accounts. Only 32 percent of all individuals surveyed support private accounts.

This survey helps us realize that Americans are concerned about Social Security, but they do not want the guarantee that is the fundamental principle of Social Security changed. Social Security has become a safety net for retirement for all American workers and we should not take action to weaken this safety net. We should consider all aspects of the Social Security system as we moved forward with the debate on reform.

#### REGARDING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

**HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to, and recognize the anniversary of the historic Voting Right Act, August 6th. It was almost a frightening coincidence that on the anniversary, many of my colleagues were attempting to defeat efforts that would prevent the use of statistical sampling to accurately count America's minorities. The opponents of an accurate count wanted to prevent minorities from being counted because it could indirectly heighten their influence in elections and the drawing of congressional districts. Mr. Speaker, the floor debate did not mark the first time that efforts were used to prevent the political franchisement of African-Americans. Indeed, the very purpose of the creation of the voting rights act was done to address the countless obstacles African-Americans faced in electing their own to Congress.

Before the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, minorities were subjected to these efforts to dilute their voting power: Gerrymandering, removing minorities from voting rolls and even outright threats of bodily harm.

The Voting Rights Act was instrumental in protecting the voting opportunities of minorities. In addition, to the chagrin of those who would like to see the clock of progress turned back, the Voting Rights Act has directly resulted in the fair election of African-Americans to Congress.

However, Mr. Speaker, I stand not only to call attention to the benefits of the Voting Rights Act, but to ask that Americans be ever vigilant in protecting the Voting Rights Act from those who wish to forever confine it to the annals of history.

As the uses and benefits of the Voting Rights Act are forever enduring, so are the attacks and efforts to eliminate it. Unfortunately, there are those who seek to eliminate or weaken the protections provided by the Voting Rights Act. If they are successful, then the wonderful diversity of Congress that mirrors